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Mexico

Kosher Foods

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Report Highlights:

Mexico's kosher food sector provides a significant market for U.S. kosher food exports, particularly the market serving the Jewish community in Mexico City. The Jewish population in Mexico is about 65,000, with the majority in Mexico City. Other consumers of kosher products are consumers interested in the quality of kosher foods.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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THE MEXICAN MARKET FOR KOSHER FOODS

I. Market Overview

Mexico's kosher food sector has continued to grow over the last few years. This growth is primarily due to an increase in the Jewish population. Some kosher store owners estimate that the Jewish population now exceeds 60,000 in Mexico City and that sales in select stores have increased by as much as 70 percent over the last five years.

The United States is the top foreign supplier of kosher food to the Mexican market. Demand for U.S. products is highest during important religious holidays, such as Passover, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Orthodox Jews, who comprise about 10 percent of the Jewish community, are the main consumers of kosher food. They follow strict kosher laws. Another large group of the Jewish community observes kosher laws in their homes, but not when eating outside of the home. Most of the Jewish community in Mexico City consumes kosher products during religious holidays.

The Mexican Jewish community is divided in two major groups by geographic origin. The Ashkenazim, descendants of Polish, Russian and other eastern European Jewish immigrants, comprise about 60 percent of the Jewish community in Mexico. The Sefaradim, from Mediterranean countries (Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria), account for the remaining 40 percent of Mexico's Jewish community.

Apart from the Jewish community, there are a growing number of consumers that purchase kosher products for quality and sanitary reasons. Some people believe that kosher products have higher food safety standards. Kosher store owners estimate that 10 percent of their customers are not Jewish.

II. Retail and Institutional Sales

Supermarkets in predominantly Jewish neighborhoods tend to have a kosher section for meat, poultry, dairy products and some processed foods. Some of the larger supermarket chains (e.g. Gigante, Walmart) maintain one or more kosher supervisors that work with Jewish committees¹ to select and certify those products as kosher. For example, they may have a kosher supervisor for meat, bakery and dairy products. These large stores also service hotels, restaurants, and catering companies that serve the Jewish community for religious holidays and celebrations. Kosher specialty stores also work closely with the Jewish committees.

A significant percentage of kosher products are imported from the United States. In a specialty store, imports can be as high as 30 percent of all products. Imported food items include: processed products such as canned vegetables, condiments, frozen meals, snack foods, candy, meat, and fish. Brand names of U.S. processed foods that carry kosher products include: Florida Natural, Seneca Sweet, Arden, Borden, Duncan Hines, Vita and Hershey. Importers work with Jewish committees to order the products needed by the

¹ The Jewish committees provide kosher certification for products in Mexico to ensure that their products meet the strict standards mandated by Jewish dietary law. These committees are comprised of the rabbis of the community with whom the retail store works. Jewish committees also may recommend kosher food needs for the Jewish community.

community. The kosher products are labeled as kosher and may include the name of the Jewish committee that approved the product.

About 15 kosher caterers operate in Mexico City. They normally purchase products from the kosher distributors and importers. While many individuals in the Jewish community do not strictly observe kosher laws year-round, they do expect kosher products to be served during celebrations and religious holidays, so kosher caterers are in demand.

III. Domestic Production

Approximately 90 percent of fresh kosher products, such as meat and poultry, are produced in Mexico and over 50 percent of kosher canned and frozen products are produced locally. Two kashrut committees are authorized to provide kosher certification for products in Mexico. They work closely with manufacturers of all types of consumer-ready products to ensure that their products meet the strict standards mandated by Jewish dietary law, thereby allowing them to be sold as kosher certified products. For meat production, kosher certifying organizations have arranged with Mexican slaughterhouses to perform kosher slaughter in a separate area of the slaughterhouse, under the supervision of a rabbi. Strict inspections are performed by the kashrut committees in every kosher manufacturing facility in order to be able to certify the products as kosher.

IV. Promotion

Mexican companies and suppliers are interested in purchasing more U.S. kosher products. Companies expressed particular interest in processed foods, kosher wine, grape juice and apple juice. There is an additional need for kosher meat including chicken, beef and fish. One company expressed interest in organic kosher products. Mexican suppliers of kosher products welcome contacts from U.S. exporters, and would like to receive more information about available U.S. kosher products. Large and small company officials expressed interest in attending kosher food shows in the United States along with a representative of one of the Jewish committees. They would also welcome having a tabletop kosher food trade show in Mexico City – an activity that the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office would be able to coordinate with U.S. companies and the State Regional Trade Groups that participate in USDA's Market Access Program.

The marketing of kosher food products is a two-step process: the first step is to obtain kosher certification, and the second step is to reach the kosher consumer through kosher product news, press releases, and advertisements in the Jewish print media. Trade sources recommended this promotion strategy, noting that most kosher consumers in Mexico are brand-loyal, interested in quality, and well read.

Many leading food manufacturers use kosher certification symbols to better position their products in the market. Some food retailers in large Jewish communities give priority to kosher-certified brands when allocating critical shelf space.

The best way to promote kosher products in Mexico is through religious organizations and specialty distributors and caterers. As noted, advertising in Jewish newspapers and magazines is one of the highly recommended and most common promotional tools. There are currently around 10 to 12 Jewish publications, including newspapers and magazines, in Mexico City. Each community has its own publications and all of them have kosher food sections. See the list of major Jewish communities in Mexico at the end of this report for more information on their publications.

In addition, many Mexican supermarkets such as Wal-Mart, Superama, Aurrerá, Carrefour, Gigante, and Comercial Mexicana in Mexico City, as well as other large retail chains in northern Mexico such as Soriana and Casa Ley, have kosher food sections that would be ideal for promotional activities.

V. Market Constraints

Mexico's import requirements for kosher food products are the same as those for non-kosher products. Importers and distributors of kosher products claim they do not usually have difficulty with the Mexican government when importing U.S. products.

Please see GAIN Report MX1205, for an overview of the rules and regulations for exporting food products to Mexico. For information about retail labeling regulations, please see GAIN Report MX1223. Both reports are available on the FAS website: www.fas.usda.gov-- under Attaché Reports.

IV. Contacts List

Organization	Contact	Address	Telephone/Fax
U.S. GOVERNMENT			
U.S. Agricultural Trade Office	Bruce Zanin Director	Jaime Balmes No. 8-201 Col. Los Morales Polanco 11510 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5280-5291, (011-52-55) 5280-6588 Fax: (011-52-55) 5281-6093
IMPORTERS-DISTRIBUTORS/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS			
Comercializadora Yarden	Importer	Vainilla No. 234 Col. Granjas Mexico 08400 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5657-0191, (011-52-55) 5657-0122 Fax: (011-52-55) 5657-1656
Ital Kosher	Importer	Emilio Castelar No. 185 Col. Polanco 11560 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55), 5281-4185 Fax: (011-52-55) 5282-2567
Shouly's Candies	Importer	Julio Verne No. 38 Col. Polanco 11560 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5280-5714, (011-52-55) 5280-5703 Fax: (011-52-55) 5282-1939
Dibo Amiga	Distributor	Atlaltunco No. 70 Col. Tecamachalco México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5294-7337
Kipe y Cosas	Distributor	Atlaltunco No. 101-A Col. Tecamachalco México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5294-4975 Fax: (011-52-55) 5293-1959

Koshertel	Distributor	Bernard Shaw No. 44 Col. Polanco 11540 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5280-2753 Fax: (011-52-55) 5280-1061
Super Emet	Distributor	Homero No. 1212 Col. Los Morales Polanco 11510 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5255-3850, (011-52-55) 5255-3800 Fax: (011-52-55) 5254-5846
Gastronomía Mosaica, S.A. de C.V.	Distributor	Homero No. 1604 Col. Los Morales Polanco 11510 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5280-0212
Elvio Frydman	Caterer	Fuente de la Huerta No. 22 Col. Tecamachalco Estado de México	Tel: (011-52-55) 5596-0339 Fax: (011-52-55) 5596-0360
Consejo Comunitario Ashkenazi	Social Institution	Edgar Alan Poe No. 236 Col. Polanco 11550 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5250-4248, (011-52-55) 5250-8257 Fax: (011-52-55) 5250-4287
Dr. Haggai Blich Yelin	Director General, Tecnologías Narisco	Tamaulipas 150-20 Piso Col. Condessa, 06140 México, D.F.	Tel: (011-52-55) 5211-2200 Fax: (011-52-55) 52120026 email: hblich@mexitec.com.mx
Monte Sinai	Community (publishes community magazine)	Fuente de San Sulsticio 16 Col. Tecamachalco 53950 Naucalpan, Edo. de Mexico	Tel: (011-52-55) 5294-8617 Fax: (011-52-55) 5294-8617